

## Senator Jay Rockefeller Remarks as Prepared Charleston, WV January 11, 2013

Thank you, Sharon. A truly perfect wife and mother. The most popular Rockefeller in West Virginia. And the love of my life.

I have asked you to join Sharon and me here today to share my plans for the future. I have decided not to run again for the U.S. Senate in 2014.

I hope that each of you, and the state that I love, can understand that this is an entirely personal decision.

It is not a political one, and it has not been easy. It's simply this:

As I approach 50 years of public service in West Virginia – 50 years of non-stop public life; 50 years of fighting for our people – and I consider seriously the other ways I want to contribute in life, and look at my incredible family – I know deep within me that the end of this term (in 2014) is the right time to recalibrate. To find a new balance for the things I love – public service, and family.

I came to Emmons as an untrained social worker, a VISTA volunteer, in 1964.

I actually had begun my public service four years earlier at the Peace Corps and the State Department.

I was in search of a clear and powerful purpose, for working and living. Emmons, and then all of West Virginia, gave me what I wanted most: a real and almost spiritual sense of mission.

So I found my calling. It was here; it still is here; and it always will be here.

West Virginians as a people are so incredibly hard-working, never shying away from any physical task or uphill battle – like the gritty proud work of a coal miner or a steel worker; or the fight for a better future, almost always against incredible odds.

That's what I found in Emmons. Real people. Tough, resolute, and giving – even when they were the ones in need. Truthfully, they gave me more than I ever could have given them.

Every day and in every minute since, West Virginia has been my home, and the people of West Virginia have been my life's work.

Public service demands -- and deserves – nothing less than everything you have, and that's what I have given it. I've been driven to make life better for people.

That's not a slogan for me. It's a truth, and an obsession.

There is a tremendous amount of greatness in West Virginia, but also a lot of hurt.

So for 50 years, nearly 30 in the Senate, I've dug in on whatever can make a difference for our state.

I've looked for every possible way to create meaningful and lasting opportunity, and I've fought to ease life's heaviest burdens for those who are forgotten and deserve better.

 To me, every child deserves a fair shot in life. So 15 years ago I wrote the Children's Health Insurance Program, which last year alone meant 40,000 children in West Virginia and nearly 8 million nationwide were able to see a doctor when they needed to.

I also wrote the E-Rate program, which has connected 92 percent of classrooms to the Internet – up from 14 percent when we started.

And I have pushed hard to establish in our tax code a bedrock of financial support not only for the middle class but also for the working poor of this country.

I've helped to double the Child Tax Credit; expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); and defend vocational and college Tuition Credits – so that every year, hundreds of thousands of struggling families in West Virginia alone have a fighting chance to make ends meet or to get ahead.

There is no substitute for a good job. So I did everything in my power for over a
decade to bring Toyota to West Virginia – now with over 1,200 workers and a
total investment of \$1.3 billion (the second largest industrial investment in the
history of our state).

Nearly 20 other Japanese companies followed Toyota here, because of our incredible workforce, and because I never stop asking for more.

I've pushed to make coal mining safer and resolve black lung cases quicker. And
in one of the peak moments of my career, I threatened to keep the Senate in
over Christmas to pass the 1992 Coal Act.

I simply would not abide the injustice of an industry going back on the promise of lifetime health care for its retirees – promises going back to the deal John L. Lewis and Harry Truman made in 1946.

So the United Mine Workers and I insisted on a new law -- the Coal Act -- which has protected over 200,000 miners and their families to date.

And, in so doing, we actually helped avert a nationwide coal strike.

In that fight and so many others, I've been proud to stand with the working men and women of America – miners and steelworkers, teachers and nurses, and everyone who deserves a fair wage, a safe place to work, and basic health care.

Our country cannot be great unless our workers' voices are heard and respected.

And I've been just as single-minded about comprehensive health care reform –
about tackling the complex, systemic change America has needed for so long.
For the simple reason that health care should be a right, not a privilege.

The Affordable Care Act is the way that 32 million Americans – more than 300,000 of them West Virginians will be able to afford health coverage. Just think of what a vast undertaking that is and what it means for people.

I'm proud to have my fingerprints all over that bill – which may be why West Virginians as a whole will benefit more than any other state.

Insurance companies will have to stop dumping people when they get sick, and stop spending more on fancy offices than on medical care. Young adults will be covered, and children with pre-existing conditions, too. Families who face a serious illness will be protected from financial ruin.

Health care is a moral imperative, and we've passed it, finally.

We've really done so much. I could go on all day -- about the work to help our veterans and our seniors live with dignity; the work to reform the intelligence community after 9-11; and to invest in science and technology, aviation and infrastructure.

I could talk about the exhilarating fights as Chairman of the Commerce Committee -- to make our cars more efficient, our phone bills more truthful, our Coast Guard more agile, and the Internet more safe.

On and on, we are leveraging the best in government to help people and to solve problems. Always keeping at the forefront what it really means here at home in West Virginia.

And that's what I'll do in my next two years in the Senate – I will continue pouring myself into it, because there is so much that's important to do.

Let me say clearly that I have every intention of keeping up this intensity – this no-holdsbarred approach to solving problems that affect people's lives -- for the rest of my Senate term and well beyond.

I will never be able to stop working for the people who have always meant so much to me, or the causes I am so passionate about.

And, there's another great passion in my life, and they're sitting right here – Sharon, our family, our grandchildren. They are endlessly supportive and bring such total joy.

It is time now – or pretty soon -- for me to do public service in new ways, and to focus more on Sharon and our family.

So I will close, with heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

To my family, whose support is unparalleled, and whose encouragement is so acutely felt;

To the most loyal friends and advisors I could have ever imagined;

To my brilliant and compassionate staff – past and present – who are endlessly dedicated to our state and to people in need (I want so much to tell people here about each one of you, person by person – I can't do that but I really want to);

And to all West Virginians – who took me in, transformed me, and supported me. Whose home is and always will be mine. And who I will always be proud to fight for.

Thank you.

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